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[This is the web site of the reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain who were expelled from the Clapham-based Socialist Party in May 1991 for using the name "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" in our propaganda as required by Clause 6 of The Object and Declaration of Principles formulated in 1904 to which we agree. We reconstituted ourselves as The Socialist Party of Great Britain in June 1991. Any money given to us for literature or support is in recognition that we are not the Clapham based Socialist Party at 52 Clapham High Street and any mistakes will be rectified.]

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The Struggle For Socialism 1904-2004

Socialists have much to consider as we mark the centenary of the founding of The SPGB. We celebrate it since we recognise the immense value of the work done by those who established this Party and set out its DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. We know how well these founding Principles have served the party over the last hundred years in defining the party's way of thinking and as the basis of our policy. But we are also aware that to date our progress towards achieving our aim, Socialism, has been very slow. To some extent, it is amazing that the party has even survived so long, let alone that we can point, with justifiable pride, at the party's achievements.

What achievements? - we are asked. Our opponents would say these do not amount to much. *How many MPs do we have? How many members?* So what is this talk of achievements if not merely whistling in the dark to keep our spirits up?

The best answer is for us to take a look at the party's historical record. After all, principles, however logical, are no use unless they hold up and are valid when applied to changing circumstances.

An early Greek materialist philosopher used the analogy of a river: although each moment you look at it you see constant changes, yet still it is the same river. That in the last hundred years there have been significant changes in capitalism is undeniable. But we would argue that it is equally true that the basis of the capitalist system, the exploitation of the working class through the wages system, remains essentially unchanged. If so, it follows that the party's Principles are as valid now as they were a hundred years ago.

First, by setting out as the Party's sole OBJECT the establishment of Socialism/Communism, and stating clearly what this meant, the Party founders rejected any programmes of 'immediate demands' or 'palliatives'. That meant a break with the parties of the Second International, such as in Britain the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent

Labour Party. All those parties, while claiming to be Socialist (or Social Democrat) parties, in fact put forward a variety of reform proposals to woo the voters. Rejection of reformism was, and is, central to The SPGB position.

To take this line took courage: it was a leap into the unknown. This was the only party in Britain that stood for Socialism and *only* for Socialism. It still is.

The DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES makes the case for Socialism as being in the interest of the working class, i.e. on the basis of the *class struggle* - the "*antagonism of interests*" between the parasitic capitalist class and the working class "*by whose labour alone all wealth is produced*". This conflict of "*interests*" can only be ended by "*working class emancipation*" and the "*establishment of common ownership of the means of production and distribution with democratic control by and in the interest of the whole community*".

In the last 100 years, generations of workers have joined The SPGB, recognising how as members of the working class they are exploited under the wages system. *Class-consciousness* is the basis of The SPGB case for Socialism, just as it is of the political organisation needed to establish Socialism. A *class-conscious working class* is an essential pre-condition for Socialism.

The clarity of the Party's theoretical argument meant that, after the Bolshevik Revolution, The SPGB opposed the claim that Socialism was established in Russia, where a system was being established that, later, even Lenin described as "*state capitalism*". Soon after the Russian Revolution (October 1917), The SPGB argued that whatever was being achieved in Russia simply could not be Socialism: was peasant Russia, with its small, urban proletariat, its economy in ruins, its cities' populations starving, ready and able to establish Socialism?

Unless a mental revolution such as the world has never seen before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than history has ever recorded, the answer is "No!"... There is no ground whatever for supposing that they [the peasants] are ready or willing to accept social ownership of the land, along with the other means of production. SOCIALIST STANDARD, August 1918, reprinted in 1948 pamphlet, RUSSIA SINCE 1917.

Likewise when the Labour Party put forward a policy for nationalisation, calling it Socialism, The SPGB opposed that as just another scheme for trying to solve the problems of capitalism:

The thing [nationalisation] is a transparent fraud. Making nationalisation pay means making it pay the millions that the Government is handing out to the former owners. The exploiters >are still living on the backs of the workers, with the difference that the Labour Party, as the Government, undertakes official responsibility for maintaining the exploitation (1945 article, quoted in our 1997 pamphlet, NEW LABOUR - A PARTY OF CAPITALISM).

Another mistaken Labour policy, which was also claimed to be Socialist, was the so-called Welfare State - the NHS and National Insurance. The SPGB analysis of any state '*welfare*' policies was rooted in our understanding of exploitation through the wages system. When the wartime government increased the amount of the worker's weekly national health and pensions insurance deduction by one penny, the Party argued that this made no real difference:

National Insurance The Wonderful World of Pensions for All

Relatively, the position is the same as before - the worker has a bob or two stopped out of his wages, the old age pensioner can still manage to escape the workhouse by sponging on his poor relatives or, if there are none, he can in most cases get a supplementary allowance from the public assistance committee, and the employers think they have done a nice little bit of business by making the worker bees save up for their old age, so saving the expense of keeping them in institutions. We hate to disillusion our capitalist masters, but would it make so much difference if the whole vast governmental apparatus of deductions, accounting and stamping were scrapped and the "pension" paid out of general taxation? Actually, it would make but little difference, for the worker's wages always tend to equal the cost of living - after all, you must feed the beast to get the work out of him - so that deductions from wages tend to be counterbalanced by increases in wages, and in any case, it is the capitalist class themselves who fork out the bulk of the taxation.

SOCIALIST STANDARD, February 1942

As for the Beveridge Report and proposals for Family Allowances, later followed by Child Benefits, Child Credits and various complicated, means-tested, schemes to supplement low wages, the Party was unimpressed:

The great problem stays even if every dot and comma of the report is put into operation. That problem is the outstanding social problem of the age - the poverty of the working-class, and not just the additional burdens borne in times of unemployment, old age and sickness, burdens which incidentally Beveridge does little to lift. The poverty of the working-class is due to the private ownership by the capitalists of the means of production and distribution. Socialism alone can end that poverty....

The Beveridge proposals will not solve the poverty problems of the working-class. They will level the workers' position as a whole, reducing the more favourably placed to a lower level, and putting the worst placed on a less evil level. This is not a "new world" of hope, but a re-distribution of misery.

BEVERIDGE RE-ORGANISES POVERTY, The SPGB pamphlet, 1943

Such arguments remain valid now, decades later. Problems of working class life under capitalism are impossible to reform. Generations of reformers have tried unsuccessfully to square the circle, to find ways to support the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, the old, and other '*redundant*' members of the working class, to have capitalism without the consequences of capitalism.

THE POOR LAW REPORT (1834) declared as the key principle that "*[the pauper's] situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the labourer of the lowest class*". The SPGB arguments on this subject are ones that echo Marx:

Pauperism is the hospital of the active labour-army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve-army ... along with the surplus population, pauperism forms a condition of capitalist production and of the capitalist development of wealth. It enters into the faux frais of capitalist production; but capital knows how to throw these, for the most part, from its own shoulders on to those of the working-class and the lower middle-class.

CAPITAL, Vol. I, chapter 25:4

Again and again, the class struggle was and is at the heart of the question. Since the class struggle is worldwide, as is the capitalist system, it follows that working class emancipation will mean the emancipation of all mankind "*without distinction of race or sex*". When war came in 1914, the party stated its internationalist position uncompromisingly, consistently and courageously. The war was fought over capitalist interests such as markets and trade routes, not over working class interests. The first wartime editorial emphasised the class war:

The question for the working class, then, is not that of British or German victory, since either event will leave them wage-slaves living upon wages. Under German rule those wages cannot be reduced much lower than under British, for every British working man knows that the masters who are shouting so loudly for us to go and die in defence of our shackles and their shekels, have left no stone unturned to force wages to the lowest possible limits. The question, then, before the workers, is the abolition of the whole social system of which war and unemployment are integral parts, and the establishment of society upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production - the establishment, that is, of Socialism. SOCIALIST STANDARD, September 1914

The First World War put a stop to the Party's outdoor meetings, and many Party members disappeared - some conscripted, some jailed, others sacked or arrested, or both. To avoid conscription, some members went abroad and became active in Socialist propaganda in America, Canada, Australia, etc. In 1916 the authorities banned the Socialist Standard from being sent abroad (its contents "*might be used by the enemy powers for their propaganda*"!) and in 1917 the police raided the party's Head Office.

In shameful contrast, the parties of the Second International, in all European countries, abandoned working-class internationalism. In Britain, while most Labour, ILP and SDP politicians supported the war, only The SPGB maintained, as a matter of policy and principle, throughout the war, the principle of *international working-class solidarity*. After the war, The SPGB MANIFESTO was republished with a new PREFACE, placing these parties' shameful betrayal on record:

As was to be expected, this mighty event proved a searching test for all those who claimed to hold Socialist principles. At the very outset [of war] the so-called International crumpled up, thus justifying our long-standing criticism. In all

the belligerent countries the pseudo-Socialists, whom we had all along denounced as mere capitalist cats paws, ranged themselves beside their respective war-lords, voting war-credits, and acting as decoys to lure men of the working class into the shambles. Everywhere organisations which had followed the opportunist policy, trying to build themselves up on compromise and political trading while claiming to be founded on Socialist principles, found themselves caught in the toils when the test time came, and the appeal was made to those passions and emotions that only Socialist knowledge can destroy...

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN was the only organisation in this country that maintained the Socialist attitude on the war. Since our inception as a party we have proclaimed the unity of interest of the workers the world over, and the antagonism of interest between the workers of the world and the master class thereof. The principles which we had proclaimed and acted upon in "peace" were sufficient to guide us in war.
MANIFESTO, Preface to Sixth Edition, 1920

The party's attitude to capitalism's wars has stayed the same: wars are not fought in the interest of the working class but over the business interests of the capitalist class. The real enemy of the worker is the capitalist on his doorstep.

As for the 'national interest', The SPGB rejects nationalism just as we oppose any ideology that divides the working class. The same principle applies to every such ideology - religion, racism and nationalism.

Political Class Struggle

The party's PRINCIPLES are rooted in arguments put forward first by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto, and later by Marx in the key policy documents he drafted for the International Working Men's Organisation. First in the Communist Manifesto and later, repeatedly and emphatically in policy statements of the First International, Marx argued that to achieve working class emancipation required class-conscious political organisation and action - "*every class struggle is a political struggle*" (THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO).

In 1871, the London Conference of the International passed a resolution on political action, drafted by Marx, asserting:

Considering, that against this collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all other parties formed by the propertied classes...

Marx: THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL AND AFTER, Pelican, p.270

Later in 1880, Marx drafted a brief theoretical introduction for the French Workers Party (Parti Ouvrier), which is worth quoting here since this too is echoed in The SPGB's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES:

*Considering,
That the emancipation of the class of producers involves all mankind, without distinction of sex or race;
That the producers can only be free when they are in possession of the means of production;...
That collective appropriation can only proceed from a revolutionary action of the class of producers - the proletariat - organised in an independent political party;
That this collective appropriation must be striven for by all means that are available to the proletariat, including universal suffrage, which will thus be transformed from the instrument of fraud that it has been up till now into an instrument of emancipation..* (ibid., pp376-7)

Throughout most of the 20th century, The SPGB was united in arguing its case on the basis of its founding principles. The "*emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex*" was well ahead of its time in 1904 and increasingly relevant in periods of racism, and when the Left later turned to the divisive politics of race and gender.

The SPGB's insistence on the need for the Socialist Party to be one that is *independent of and opposed to all other political parties* - an insistence which was also part of Marx's thinking - this was attacked both by those on the left who urged the Party to join forces with those in the Labour Party who called themselves Socialists, and by the

supporters of Leninist vanguardism. To all such parties, we pose a threat, small as we are. And so they attack us as '*sectarian*'.

Only in recent decades have we had to fight "*the enemy within*". Only in recent times have we found amongst the members of this party those who wanted to overthrow the DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. First, they objected to the so-called '*hostility*' clause. They wanted The SPGB to express support for such deserving causes as, say, democratic reform movements, regardless of whether such movements were at all interested in establishing Socialism. Some argued that the Party should become part of a broad "*anti-market, anti-state*" alliance.

Some said that to argue the case for Socialism on such old-fashioned, Marxist grounds as the class struggle would not appeal to the man or woman in the street. In a period when '*direct action*' was back in fashion, a 1984 Conference resolution, with echoes of 19th century anarchism, declared that Socialism "*will entail the immediate abolition ... of the State*". This ran counter to the Party's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES.

Those of us who objected were sneered at as mere "*D of P-ers*", and finally forced out of the party. Those who engineered these expulsions had decided their Party should no longer be called The SPGB but instead confuse the workers by calling itself 'the Socialist Party' (a name which to most workers means either the Labour Party or some Trotskyist splinter group). They were confident that their Party would be able to grow rapidly, once freed from the restraints imposed by adherence to The SPGB's unifying principles.

Since then, however, their organisation has shrunk to a fraction of its past strength. Few branches of that Party exist now, even on paper, even in London. At Conferences they are lucky to find a dozen or so members present. Confusion reigns among their associated organisations abroad and overseas contacts.

Meanwhile, the reconstituted The SPGB is arguing the case for Socialism on the basis of The SPGB's founding DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. This we have been doing for over a decade now, vigorously, consistently, and without compromise on the central questions: the class struggle and the need to organise as an independent political party, opposed to all other political parties and working only for Socialism.

A hundred years on, and the case for Socialism remains. The SPGB as ever argues for Socialism and only for Socialism - the whole bakery, not just a larger slice of the loaf.

The various historic milestones on the way, such as wars, the General Strike, economic crises and the supposed inevitable '*collapse*' of capitalism, the Russian revolution and the later supposed '*collapse of communism*', among others - these have been marked by many betrayals of the Socialist cause and working-class internationalism by parties claiming to be socialist but in fact riddled and rotten with reformist opportunism. They have also tested the ability of Socialists to apply our principles and our Marxist analysis to these developments in capitalism.

Our historic record is one to be proud of. Only The SPGB has steered a true course, not deviating from our sole purpose - Socialism. That, we claim, is a proud achievement, something to celebrate and to honour. We assert that the founding members of this party built on sound foundations, and we salute them for their clear-sightedness, courage and dedication: we, who walk in their footsteps and who share their vision and their uncompromising principles.

The SPGB will not barter its independence for promises of reform ...For the party of the working class, one course alone is open, and that involves unceasing hostility to all parties, no matter what their plea, that lend their aid to the administration of the existing social order and thus contribute, consciously or otherwise, to its maintenance. Our object is its overthrow.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, 1932 edition, p18.

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Propaganda, Politics and Revolution

Has Capitalism Triumphed?

Never has the capitalist class felt so secure. Never has their wealth and privilege been so great. According to the Institute for Policy Studies, 497 billionaires now have a combined wealth of \$1.54 trillion greater than that owned by half the world's population.

The capitalist class basks in the sun while their tame academics spread the lie that capitalism has globally triumphed. LSE Professor, Patrick Minford proclaims in his book "MARKETS NOT STAKES - THE TRIUMPH OF CAPITALISM AND THE STAKEHOLDER FALLACY (1998) that the American eagle has spread its free market wings over the six continents of the world. Capitalist triumphalism is for Minford American triumphalism. "USA!: USA!: USA!" bellows the professor throughout the book's 257 pages. He has come a long way since his Maoist student days of the 1960's.

The propaganda of 21st century capitalism is the propaganda of triumphalism. It is also the propaganda of a lie. The truth is altogether different. Socialism has not failed because Socialism has never existed. The Socialist revolution has still to take place. There has never been a test of a Socialist majority taking conscious and political action. Nowhere has there ever been common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

Adair Turner, Vice Chairman of Merrill Lynch Europe (total client assets: approximately US\$1.4 trillion) and a director of a number of media and Internet companies, shares this triumphalism. He, too, propagates the lie that Socialism has been seen off by what he calls "*the dynamism of the free market*".

Mr Turner is not only a very wealthy capitalist in his own right but he is also a visiting professor at the London School of Economics; from 1995 to 1999 he was Director-General of the Confederation of British Industry and before that a director of McKinsey and Company. He is also the Chairman of the Low Pay Commission and Chairman of the Pension Commission.

The door of Number Ten is open to him. He wines and dines there. He no doubt gets a card from Tony at Christmas. He is on the Prime Minister's panel of independent strategic advisors.

Mr Turner is also a polemicist for the capitalist class. He propagates the interests of the capitalist class. He deeply believes in capitalism. And not without reason. As a capitalist he lives off the unearned income of profit. He lives off the exploitation of the working class who actually produce all the social wealth. The working class are the wealth creators, not the capitalist class.

Turner has recently written a book in which he praises capitalism. As a side swipe at Marx he has called his book "JUST CAPITAL". The title is a play on words. Not only is Mr Turner implying that capitalism is "*just, equitable and fair*" to both the capitalist class and the working class. He is also implying that there is just Capital. All practical alternatives have been seen off. To slightly change a remark once made by the rock musician Frank Zappa, "*there is more stupidity in economics than there is hydrogen in the universe*".

Hired Prize-Fighters

You can imagine Mr Turner sitting each day on a mat in his plush London office somewhere in the City arms folded chanting out "*there is no alternative*". This is Mr Turner's political mantra. With all his faith in capitalism, Mr Turner can never see capitalism as it really is. He is no disinterested scientist but an apologist for the profit system of class exploitation. Capitalist economics long ago gave up being a science. It is now a set of ruling class ideas and beliefs.

In place of disinterested inquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and the evil intent of apologetic.

Marx, CAPITAL, Preface to 2nd Edition, p.19

JUST CAPITAL contains the usual puff from Turner's devotees. Will Hutton praises it to the hilt, so do Professor Ralf Dahrendorf and Jonathan Porritt. Workers should be wary of radicals from universities who wish to promote themselves as theoretical leaders. Hutton is your typical GUARDIAN contributor, a Utopian dreamer who thinks you can have capitalism without the effects of capitalism. And Professor Dahrendorf has spent an academic lifetime trying

and failing to produce a bourgeois theory of class to match Marx's own scientific propositions about class, class interest and class struggle.

We do not intend to spend more time on Mr Turner or his book than he deserves. It is pretty poor capitalist propaganda, bearing all the hallmarks of an apologetic, shallow economics tract. The book peddles the vulgar belief that you can have a crisis-free market economy with perfect information, ever-increasing choice for all, harmony of interests between capital and labour, and world peace through the operation of commodity production and exchange for profit.

In the real world Marx showed that capitalism is anarchic and crisis-ridden with irresolvable contradictions. Class conflict is built into the very system itself as capitalist production for profit prevents the needs of the world's population from being met. In the real world, away from economic seminars, billions are unemployed. War and conflict is everywhere except in economic text books. Capitalism can only ever be unpleasant, exploitative, violent and destructive.

Vietnam: from capitalism to capitalism

However we will start with Mr Turner's belief that capitalism is everywhere triumphant. He states right at the beginning of the book:

In November 2000 Bill Clinton visited Vietnam, the country which twenty-five years earlier had expelled America's military might, and which had set out to build a communist society. He bought a message of reconciliation but also a message of confidence in the capitalist model, urging the Vietnamese to embrace the "force of nature" which globalization and the market economy appear to represent. He was well received and not surprisingly. For Vietnam is already integrating into the global market economy, its exports competing in developed country markets on the basis of low labour cost, its factories producing goods for multinational firms, its domestic economy increasingly organized on market principles.

In that conversion to the market economy it is following in the footsteps of its one-time communist models - Russia and China. The triumph of the global free market appears complete (p7).

The Vietnamese ruling class did not need any lecture from Mr Clinton or Mr Turner about embracing capitalism. Vietnam had already embraced capitalism, first through a primitive and crude nationalisation programme, and now, increasingly, a capitalism found elsewhere in the world.

The first primitive form, state capitalism, was supported by the capitalist Left in the 1960's and 1970's. Remember the likes of Tariq Ali, linking arms with other Trotskyists at London demonstrations, childishly shouting out "*Ho- Ho- Ho Chi Min*". Where are the defenders of state capitalism now?

Now another form of capitalism in Vietnam is supported by the fundamentalist free-market Right whose equally inane chant is "*Free Trade*".

As regards the interests of the working class, both forms of capitalism are merely two sides of the same exploitative coin. Wherever there is wage labour, there is exploitation. Wherever the capital-labour relationship exists, there is the exercise of class power and class privilege. This is borne out by developments in Vietnam.

What is the reality of capitalism in Vietnam? Here is the reality. First, the ASIA TIMES (June 2000) with an article stating that in Vietnam there are:

- Primitive conditions of employment - high levels of accidents and deaths at work
- A high rate of unemployment at 7.4%
- Large-scale unplanned migration to the cities
- No free trade unions
- No free political party advocating Socialism

The CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION wrote, in their 2000 report, that in Vietnam:

· 12,675 children under 15 years are working in dangerous and unhealthy conditions usually for multinational corporations.

· 22,000 children working in hazardous industries, many supplying commodities for the world market.

The ANTI LABOUR SWEAT SHOP LEAGUE (January 2004) stated that:

Any organization put together by the workers will be immediately destroyed at once. These people are basically slaves, they are scared into staying, they are paid very, very low wages or nothing at all, and are denied basic benefits and worker's rights ...

Some factory management rape, abuse, and assault the workers putting a sense of fear in them so they don't leave and stay despite the abuse.

So there we have it, capitalist propaganda and the reality: the myth of the "*best of all possible worlds*" on the one hand, and the contrasting reality of profit, exploitation and human misery. Mr Turner is, of course, not interested in the repression of free trade unions, the low pay, exploitation, the use of child labour, the sweat shops, and political dictatorship. The last thing he would want to see is a genuine Socialist Party in Vietnam advocating the abolition of the wages system. He only sees potential markets and cheap labour to exploit.

We can also look at capitalism in Vietnam from a Marxist perspective. Marx showed that sellers of commodities can never know whether they will find a buyer in the market. If the time period is too great, an economic crisis will occur with bankruptcy and unemployment the consequence. This is the anarchy of capitalist production.

Marx considered trade crises an expression of all the contradictions of capitalism:

All contradictions of bourgeois production collectively come into eruption in the general crises on the world market. THEORIES OF SURPLUS VALUE, Volume II, Part II, p.318

At present there is an economic crisis in coffee production (INDEPENDENT 4 April 2004). The price of coffee has collapsed around the world. Ironically, during the early 1990's, Vietnam was encouraged by the World Bank to grow coffee. A huge increase in production of Vietnamese coffee took place. In the 1980's, Vietnam was 42nd ranked commodity producer in coffee on the world market (so much for the lie that Vietnam was Socialist/Communist). But by 2001, Vietnam produced about 15 million bags making it the second largest producer of coffee worldwide. Vietnam's coffee producers glutted the market. There are more sellers of coffee than buyers. The Vietnamese coffee farmers are now having to sell their coffee at only 60% of the cost of production and repay loans taken out in the misguided belief that there would be a market for their coffee.

Anthony Wild, a commentator on coffee production recently wrote:

Vietnamese coffee production, having boomed, is now falling rapidly as it is realised that the promised riches are chimerical. The larger cost, to the fragile highland environment, to its beleaguered wildlife, to the displaced indigenes, and to the migrant lowlanders left stranded without an income and deep in debt is incalculable.

COFFEE: A DARK HISTORY, Fourth Estate 2004

Living in the Real World

Whose analysis of capitalism is more penetrating, scientific and correct - Marx's or Turner's? Turner believes that the capitalist market is perfect. Marx showed it to be anarchic, unpredictable and destructive. Who describes the real world, Turner or Marx? Did Turner anticipate the current crisis in the coffee market with the resultant bankruptcy and unemployment in Vietnam? Marx showed that capitalism passes from one economic crisis to another. Marx had a scientific understanding of and insight into capitalist production for profit and its laws that has never been surpassed. Certainly not by such as Mr Turner.

Mr Turner, like all economists, is so much the slave to the economic system that he shuts his eyes to facts for fear of seeing them. In the face of all the poverty, all the exploitation and all the social alienation, he coolly denies there is anything wrong with commodity production and exchange for profit. The distress of dying children for want of food does not reach his blunted senses - the cry of hunger has no voice for him. And were there to be civil war and the

fabric of capitalist society torn to pieces, he would still keep repeating "*All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds*".

Then there is the question of capital. Like all economists, Turner makes the error of depicting capital as a "*thing*". Capital, is in fact, a social relationship - a class relationship between workers, capitalists and the means of production.

In a famous passage in WAGE LABOUR AND CAPITAL, Marx remarked:

A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave in certain relations. A cotton-spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes capital only in certain relations. Torn from these relationships it is no more capital than gold is money or sugar the price of sugar... Capital... is a social relation of production. It is a bourgeois production relation, a production relation of bourgeois society.

Abolish the social relationship between capital and labour, abolish the wages system, and human labour-power ceases to be a commodity, ceases to be variable capital. The same applies to raw resources and other means of production. The means of production are only "*constant capital*" under capitalism. Abolish capitalism and establish socialism, and the means of production will be owned in common. Turner's propaganda is wrong in another important respect. Russia and China have always traded on the world market. They have always been part of world capitalism. State capitalist countries have not been immune from capitalism's laws and contradictions.

The labour theory of value holds good wherever wage labour is exploited in the productive process.

And it is a misnomer to refer to China and Russia as "*Communist*". You can label a bottle of whitewash "*milk*". But when you come to drink it, the content still tastes of whitewash. This applies as much to Vietnamese capitalism masquerading as "*Communism*" as it does to books published with the "*Triumph of Capitalism*" printed on their cover.

The Legacy of War

An estimated 5,700 tons, or 12 million gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed on South Vietnam during the war, destroying as much as 14 per cent of the forest cover and 50% of the mangrove swamp that had previously been a valuable source of lumber. Over 4.5 million acres of vegetation were wiped out, with devastating results for the wildlife and the ecology, let alone any unfortunate Vietnamese who found themselves in the flight path of the sprayers. Inevitably farms and smallholdings were also sprayed, causing widespread poverty and starvation. It was 10 years before crops could again be grown on affected land.. The health costs are still not fully understood, but about 400,000 deaths and serious cases of illness, and a further 500,000 birth defects in Vietnam have been attributed to the agent.

THE INDEPENDENT , 4 April 2004.

Predicting The Unpredictable and Irrational

Some inventors chase the dream of a perpetual motion machine. Others seek a formula for predicting the ups and downs of stock markets and foreign exchange markets. Contrary to the simple belief of the Adam Smith school of economics, "*as the effectiveness of one trader's actions depends on what all the others do, rationality is an unreliable guide*". So devising a successful prediction model means simply picking up on "*patterns in past price movements and [using] them to predict the future*". Easier said than done - given that these markets are often afflicted by "*mass panics, waves of euphoria, and other collective movements*" (NEW SCIENTIST, 10 April 2004). Remember the hedge fund, LTCM, based on a mathematical model supposed to ensure profits? An utter disaster. Punters would have been better sticking to the horses or the Lottery!

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His Master's Voice

Socialists are often asked why we spend so much time on the question of inflation. We would spend less time on this

particularly dull subject were it not for politicians, economists and journalists blaming workers for inflation.

A recent example of the fallacious assertion that workers cause inflation can be seen in the smug and witless column by Anthony Hilton (EVENING STANDARD, 8.07.02). He tried to draw a parallel with the 1970's when public sector unions were on strike, there was rising inflation, and there was a trade depression with high unemployment.

In his column, "*Public sector pay and the spectre of stagflation*", Hilton based his case on statistics from the investment bank Schroeder Salomon Smith Barney, whose understanding of inflation was equal to Hilton's own economic illiteracy.

Hilton claimed that '*inflation*' was evident in the private sector, concluding that "*Historically, wage rises in the public sector filter out into the private sector and lead to a parallel surge of inflation there*".

They do no such thing. Inflation is not caused by workers struggling for higher wage rises. Even some economists admit this. In his article "WAGES, INFLATION AND RESERVE BANK MYTHS, the economist Gerard Jackson stated that "*there is absolutely no support in history for the view that inflation can ever be the function of wage growth*" (BROOKES NEWS, 23 April 2003). Inflation is caused by governments, year after year, printing and putting into circulation hundreds of millions of pounds of excess paper money.

Other things being equal, wherever and whenever currency has been issued in excess, the price level has risen, and wherever and whenever currency has been restricted, prices have stabilised or fallen. In the period 1920-22, the printing presses of the German central bank were busy day and night pouring out notes, and prices were rocketing upwards. In Britain in the same three-year period the Government had decided to halt inflation, the note issue was restricted, and prices were falling fast.

Inflation is not the only factor affecting prices. In Britain, in the 90 years before 1914 when there was no inflation (the price level in 1914 being below that of 1820), prices rose moderately in trade booms and fell again in periods of bad trade, a process also explained by Marx.

The reason there was no inflation in Britain, in the century before 1914, was that through the operation of the gold standard the note issue was controlled. Beyond a fixed low limit the Bank of England could not issue additional notes without adding an equivalent amount of gold to the reserve in its vaults. Also the notes, by law, were freely convertible into a fixed amount of gold - one pound being fixed at about a quarter of an ounce of gold. Gold coins and Bank of England notes both circulated but, because of legally enforced convertibility, a Bank of England note was "*as good as gold*", and the combined circulation of notes and gold coins was proportionate to the total amount of gold in the reserves.

Marx showed why, if the total amount of gold is replaced by inconvertible paper money, and if the amount of that paper money is then issued in excess, prices are pushed up accordingly:

If the quantity of paper money issued is, for instance, double what it ought to be, then in actual fact one pound has become the money name of about one-eighth of an ounce of gold instead of about one quarter of an ounce... The values previously expressed by the price £1 will now be expressed by the price £2.

CAPITAL, Vol. 1 Allen & Unwin Edition, p108

Governments since 1938 have followed a policy of continually increasing the amount of currency in circulation, from under £500 million in 1938 to over £39,000 million in January 2004 (*Bank of England: Monetary & Financial Statistics* March 2004). In 1977 the note issue was £7,000 million, an increase at the time far beyond any increase that would have been necessary because of expansion of total production and trade. In 1976 and 1977, when the government claimed that its '*wages and incomes policy*' would curb inflation, the flood of additional paper money went on without interruption.

The man, more than any other, who was responsible for abandoning the nineteenth-century policy of controlling the amount of paper money was J M Keynes, who declared that it was no longer necessary "*to watch and control the creation of currency*".

So for 40 years the major British political parties and the trade unions were misled by the Keynesian policy of

inflation into believing that capitalism could be rid of unemployment and trade depressions. The simultaneous existence of both inflation and an economic depression in the late 1970's destroyed Keynesian economic credibility.

'*Wage inflation*' is an economic myth. When inflation increases through government policy, workers are compelled to struggle for higher wages otherwise their real incomes would fall as they did under the Callaghan government of the 1970's.

What of those economists and journalists who peddle the lie that workers cause inflation? Most have been uncritically taught this economic nonsense when they were students and know no better. It is economic orthodoxy in text books. Marx's work on the subject is a closed book to them.

We waited a year to look again at Mr Hilton's prediction. He was hopelessly wrong. The rate of inflation did not increase as he claimed it would. In fact inflation stayed about the same at under 2% (NATIONAL STATISTICS; *Consumer Price Index, January 2002 to July 2003*). His piece of journalism was aimed squarely at attacking the working class. That is what he is paid for. Journalists like Mr Hilton are bought men and women. Marx called them "*prize-fighters*". They produce and reproduce ruling class ideas for a living. The phrase intellectual prostitution comes to mind.

Socialists are bought by no one. We stand on our own two feet and tell the truth. Capitalism, whether with inflation, a stable currency or deflation, can never be made to work in the interests of the working class. However, when capitalism goes wrong, as it invariably does, or when workers try to struggle for increases in pay, capitalist politicians will waste no time in either blaming workers or attempting to split the working class by pitting one group of workers against another.

Of Greed and Need

Alan Greenspan: "*An infectious greed seemed to grip much of our business community*"(testimony to the Senate Banking Committee, 16 July 2002)
Frank Partnoy, INFECTIOUS GREED, 2004

"Wages are, above all, also determined by their relation to the gain, to the profit of the capitalist." If money wages rise less than prices do, "the share of capital relative to the share of labour has risen. The division of social wealth between capital and labour has become still more unequal. With the same capital, the capitalist commands a greater quantity of labour." Marx, WAGE LABOUR AND CAPITAL

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The Clapham Party's Cover-Up

It is now over a year since the Clapham-based Socialist Party were officially informed that the World Socialist Party (India) had decided that they would recognise The SPGB and sever links with the Clapham Party. The WSP (I) made their decision after lengthy consideration at their Conference (21-23 February 2003) and notified the Clapham party shortly after. Months later, the WSP (I) were surprised to find their party's details were still listed in the Clapham party's journal, the Socialist Standard, and on Internet websites controlled by the Clapham party. In May 2003 they protested to the Clapham party:

The Ninth Annual Conference (February 21 - 23, 2003) of the World Socialist Party (India) has severed the Party's companionship with the Socialist Party (Clapham) by withdrawing its misplaced recognition of them, while recognizing The SPGB, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB as the genuine The SPGB. Thus, the WSP (India) is no longer a Companion Party of the so-called World Socialist Movement. By now, therefore, its name should have been deleted from both the WSM listings in the Socialist Standard and the Website. But it is yet to be done. Well, it should not linger over [this] any longer.

The Clapham Party's General Secretary replied (24 June 2003):

Subject: Re: To delete WSP (INDIA) from the WSM listings: On the matter of your email below, you are correct - the contact details of your organisation will not appear in the next issue of the Socialist Standard (July 2003), and when the comrade who helps maintain the website is back from holiday at the end of this month I will contact him to request that your organisation's details are removed as an affiliate of the WSM.

A misleading statement appeared, belatedly, in the Socialist Standard (October 2003):

In April a 15-page circular emanating from the E-mail address of the World Socialist Party (India) was sent to various people including ourselves. It contained various allegations against The SPGB and other parties of the World Socialist Movement, all based on the conspiracy theory that with end of the post-war boom in the early 1970s and the revolutionary possibilities this supposedly opened up, pro-capitalist elements had been infiltrated into The SPGB with the aim of diverting the working-class, particularly in the non-European World, from learning about real socialism.

The content and tone of the circular revealed that those who issued it did not have the same conception of internal party democracy as the other parties of the World Socialist Movement.

The SPGB Executive Committee sent a detailed and reasoned reply at the beginning of May, refuting the allegations and asking for them to be substantiated or withdrawn and for our reply to be put before the membership of the WSP (India). (For the full texts of the circular and our reply see, in particular, messages 2335 and 2441 at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/spintcml>.) No reply was received, and those responsible for the circular indicated through third-parties that none would be forthcoming. In these circumstances, at its meeting in September, the EC concluded that the people using the name and address of the WSP (India) had put themselves outside the WSM and called upon socialists in India, including in particular expelled members of the WSP (India), to reorganize themselves on a sound, democratic basis.

But why did they wait from May to September to take the WSP(I)'s details from the listing in their journal?

Their claim that they had not received a reply from the WSP(I) has to be set alongside the fact that many of their members flatly refused to enter into correspondence with the WSP(I), to answer the WSP(I)'s *Critique*, and, abusively, even demanded not to hear from them again. The brush-off is Clapham's usual way of dealing with those who refuse to support them. Clapham's practice goes counter to The SPGB's openness to debate. You cannot convince your opponents that you have a strong case by hiding your head in the sand and hoping they will fade away. That is the behaviour of those who know their case is weak.

The Clapham party's other method is to try to discredit opponents by smear tactics, an old Leftwing ploy. They like to claim the moral high ground, asserting that they, and they alone, are truly democratic.

In a recent statement, the WSP (India) commented:

As things stand, their so-called 'detailed and reasoned reply' had from the start been well dealt with, and sufficiently evidenced, in the CRITIQUE and subsequent replies to the many subterfuges from their followers. Theirs were mere face saving operations to tactfully avoid the WSP (India)'s exposure of their monstrous distortions, lies and slanders
...

Already, on 12 February 2003, the WSP (India)'s EC meeting minutes had pointed out the Clapham SP's autocratic tactics: 'the WSM listings on the Socialist Standard show unilateral changes after October last, and these do not tally with those on the Socialist Party website as well as in the WSP (US) publications'.

And on 31 October 2003 Comrade John Thompson from Canada in his resignation letter confirmed:

"The SP and their baby, the WSM, [are] autocratically maintained and edited by a small committee in the SP and allowing membership who do not understand the socialist case ... I am opposed to the WSM. There is a racial promotion in the WSM as well. That is with the recent introduction of a Socialist Standard sized publication called the African Socialist. Socialism is a worldwide concept and depends on workers of the world uniting in emancipation from wage slavery. Socialists do not promote socialism by continental congress!"

The Clapham people speak in many voices to hide folders of facts behind folders of fiction. And that's their unique 'conception of internal party democracy', no doubt! But what ex-insiders have gathered from the facts is that the WSM is the name of a small Clapham committee's opportunistic game. Who knows who concludes what, when and under what circumstances? And the so-called companion parties of the WSM are in no position to question why, but to hold those fictions high! And that's their 'sound democratic basis', maybe!"

The Clapham party's attempt to conceal the facts was a shabby attempt to deny workers information. That the Clapham party clearly prefers to conceal such matters is a measure of how far the people who run that Party and the WSM have deviated from any principle of democratic organisation.

Ironically, the Clapham party's belated admission that the WSP (India) had left the WSM fold actually represents a small step forward towards something like openness. Maybe they should be congratulated.

After all, when did they get round to admitting to their own members and readers of the Socialist Standard the facts about the 1991 expulsions which led, predictably, to the establishment of the reconstituted The SPGB?

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Parliament or Direct Action?

In this day and age the idea of Black Rod solemnly knocking on the door of the House of Commons so that the Queen can go in and read a speech that has been written for her by the government is a piece of nonsense that accords well with the rest of bourgeois tradition.

What we see in parliament today is a mockery of democracy. The chamber of the House of Commons rarely has 10 per cent of its 659 members present. There are probably more MPs propping up the commons bar at any given time than there are present in the chamber. When the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition are present and due to address the House, only then is it filled to capacity.

The spectacle is one where the front-bench leaders do most of the speaking and the rest jeer and cheer, like a lot of unruly children. There are jibes and counter-jibes, and cheap point-scoring is the game of the day. Order papers are waved wildly but substance and reasoned argument, for the most part, are sadly lacking.

The political confusion and leadership fetishism inside parliament reflect those same conditions existing in the world at large outside. In the absence of a Socialist working class electorate, parliament can only be used by reformist politicians to run capitalism.

It must be remembered that this state of affairs exists because workers are deluded enough to vote for it. It is utterly absurd to believe that anything can be done about Socialism, inside or outside of parliament, without a majority of workers understanding and wanting it.

To regard politics and parliament as uniquely corrupt is a mistake. All the fraud and lying, the extremes of riches and poverty, militarism and conflict, are the normality of capitalism. It is wrong to imagine the institutions of a system built on exploitation as capable of being other than a reflection of the rivalry and the promotion of capitalist class interests which characterise the system as a whole. The warped ideology of nationalism and religion wrapped up in monetary relations permeates the entire edifice of capitalism.

Trades Unions - Industrial Action

Trade unions represent organised labour in factories, transport, mines and offices, but in the UK only nine million out of 27 million workers are in unions. The best unions can do, or have ever been able to do, is to bargain and negotiate

with the owning class about the degree of exploitation of their members. "*Sell-out*" is an oft-repeated cry, especially when governments impose wage restraint. This exposes the weakness of industrial action when confronted by political power. It also shows the folly of trade unions financing the Labour Party which, when in power, always attacks organised labour.

Although workers have to resist the downward pressure on their working conditions, in particular on wages, this resistance should be seen in its correct perspective. While the capitalist class (the employers) own and control the means of production, political power in the hands of capitalist politicians (alleged labour or avowedly capitalist) remains a threat to the working class. It must be remembered that, overwhelmingly, it is the votes of workers that give their class enemies power.

Against this background Trotskyite and anarchist organisations who advocate taking and holding the means of production must be seen as a danger to workers seeking emancipation. All such advocates of '*direct action*' merely seek to avoid the need for majority understanding. At bottom they have a contemptuous attitude which leaves workers dependent upon leaders and exposed to the coercive State.

We are asked to accept the nonsensical view that the ruling class can close down parliament against a Socialist majority but cannot stop a minority of workers occupying factories. The revolutionary procedure involved in gaining a democratic consensus by voting for Socialism is a social as well as a political act. It concerns and involves society in its entirety, not just industry as 'workers' control' proponents would have it.

Direct Action For What?

Consider some other aspects of direct action. The late Alexander Berkman, in his booklet ABC of Anarchism (Freedom Press, 1942), discusses bombing and killing as a means of removing tyrants in the name of justice. In a chapter headed *Is Anarchism Violence?* he says: "*Yes, Anarchists have thrown bombs and have sometimes resorted to violence. You will find that this applies to all men and to all times*" (p14).

After giving examples as far back as ancient Rome, he says: "*I mention these instances to illustrate the fact that from time immemorial despots met their fate at the hands of outraged lovers of liberty. Their acts were cases of individual rebellion against wrong and injustice*" (p15).

What is really of interest in these arguments is that they show anarchism as completely lacking in any theory of history. "*Men at all times*" and "*time immemorial*"?! It cannot be shown that disposing of this or that despot or tyrant has rid the world of despotism and tyranny or could do so. The fact that capitalism creates a world ready for change and a class whose interests lie in ending capitalism is lost on such people.

In earlier class societies the ownership of the means of wealth production by a minority and the exploitation of a subject class could not be abolished. Capitalism paves the way for a classless society.

Berkman poses the question "*What must be abolished, then, to secure liberty?*" and answers: "*That thing is government*" (p21). The confusion of anarchist thinking is made even clearer with this statement:

It follows that when government is abolished wage slavery and capitalism must go with it, because they cannot exist without the support and protection of government.

Governments protect wage-slavery and capitalism with the coercive armed forces of the State. To gloss over this and talk about simply abolishing government is dangerous nonsense. How this coercive armed State can be prevented from protecting capitalism without gaining control of it is the crux of the whole matter.

This question is answered in The SPGB's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, particularly Clause 6 which declares that:

"... *the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government ...*" so that government machinery, including the armed forces "*...may be converted from an instrument of oppression into*

the agent of emancipation".

The fact is that anarchists have no theoretical foundation to prevent them fantasising or to show them the inconsistencies in their arguments.

Berkman asks himself the question: "*But are not the Bolsheviks Communists?*" and says: "*Yes, the Bolsheviks are Communists, but they want their dictatorship, their government to compel people to live in Communism*"(p24).

This betrays total ignorance of everything they seek to discuss. The fact that they believe that Communism can be compatible with government, dictatorship and compulsion, shows they understand nothing. The fact that the Bolsheviks were a conspiratorial minority, dedicated to leader-worship and the pursuit of power, means that, apart from using the terms Socialism and Communism and abusing Marx's teaching on the subject, they were concerned with gaining dictatorial power - not Communism.

In helping to perpetuate Bolshevik falsehoods, anarchists such as Berkman have helped to misrepresent Socialism and Communism. These two words mean the same thing and were used interchangeably by Marx and Engels. They mean the worldwide common ownership of the means of production, the end of class society, and of money, markets and frontiers, with production solely for use. Communism was not historically applicable to predominantly peasant Russia when the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, and 'Socialism in one country' is absurdly un-Marxist.

Means and Ends

The first fact of working class politics is that ends and means have to be compatible. If the starting point is with a conspiratorial minority and a demagogue in the role of leader, with a mass following of ignorant people willing to listen to promises and follow leaders, later when power is attained, the relation of an elite minority with an ignorant mass will continue. The end is determined by the means.

If the compatibility argument is sound and in line with history, as we claim it is, then it follows logically that parties and leaders which adopt non-Socialist means do not have Socialism as their end or object.

The Labour Party has long abandoned any pretence of being Socialist. It is an openly capitalist party, running capitalism. Like the Bolsheviks, they are an elitist party of demagogues, who depend upon an ignorant mass believing their promises and voting them into power.

Only a party seeking a democratic majority of workers consciously aiming for Socialism has a valid claim to being Socialist. The SPGB is such a party. As the modern working class is the final subject class, it can only use political power as the means to end the power of one class over another, finally and forever.

Violent Minorities?

Forty and more years ago a frequent question about parliament was: "*What would you do about a recalcitrant minority?*" If we take the question at its face value, suggesting that a determined, violent, minority could be an obstacle to establishing Socialism, then it strengthens the case for a Socialist majority to gain control of political power.

This would prevent state power being used against the majority wanting Socialism; it would ensure that a violent minority could not thwart the majority, and it would demonstrate that Socialists chose the democratic way, while the minority status of the recalcitrants would be exposed. Should there be a peaceful minority opposition, every facility would be freely available for its expression, unlike the bourgeois pretence of democracy in relation to Socialists today.

It should be noticed that when all the contrived and imaginative obstacles to Socialism being established democratically through parliament are added up they amount to the conviction that society can never change because the ingenuity of the capitalist class and their agents won't let it, thus conferring the mantle of eternity upon the

capitalist system. The further you move away from the quest to gain political power, the more vague and intangible become your aspirations to change. Capitalism is here today because the great majority of workers support it and vote for it.

Apart from workers withdrawing their support from this system, what answer is there? They do the bulk of the killing and the dying. Apart from Socialist understanding, what can unite the world's workers in rejecting militarism, nationalism and religion?

If political power is of no consequence to workers, it is strange how tenaciously every ruling class on earth hangs on to it. George W Bush has no illusions about the advantages of political power. He set himself the target of \$200m to fight for re-election. American workers, like many workers in Britain and elsewhere, protested against the Iraq war. But if American workers switched to voting for someone like Bill

Clinton, who bombed Serbia as well as Iraq, and maintained genocidal sanctions against Iraq - what would be gained? Nothing is gained by switching from one capitalist party to another. But, when such workers turn away from capitalism and use their votes for Socialism, society will change.

After nearly 30 years of indiscriminate bombing and shooting, Northern Ireland's Sinn Fein leaders, Adams and McGuinness, now strain every sinew to gain political power. They would hardly have discovered a love of the ballot box if IRA direct action was successful.

In the early 1950s, Kenya was engaged in a bloody rebellion against British land grabbing. The Mau Mau movement expressed the long-standing grievance of the Kikuyu tribes people. Jomo Kenyatta, their leader, was imprisoned. Nearly ten years later he took over as Prime Minister of independent Kenya. State power was the key to dominance on both sides. This showed that a mere change of rulers did not remove the extreme misery of the people of Kenya - a lesson yet to be learned in the struggles going on in Northern Ireland.

The necessity for controlling the armed forces of the State is universally understood by the ruling elite in every country on earth. The advantages of coercive state power should not be lost on the various Trotskyite sects. Having wasted years "boring from within" the Labour Party, they must remember that Trotsky himself was part of Lenin's coercive State, using the Red Army to crush rebellious sailors at Kronstadt in 1921. The Kronstadt sailors' demands had been for:

... democratic elections, freedom of speech and the press, and the release of all political prisoners. The rising was mercilessly repressed by the Red Army, under Trotsky's direction, surviving mutineers being swiftly and ruthlessly shot.

J M Roberts THE PENGUIN HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, p294

The murky, behind the scenes, manoeuvres involved in power struggles are not always clearly reported as when, in November 2003, Shevardnadze was deposed as President of the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Shevardnadze had assured the Russians, who have two military bases in the country, that he would not resign. Then 200 of his own National Guards switched sides and, in the face of popular demands, he stood down. America's Colin Powell, concerned about the oil and gas pipelines under construction to transport Central Asian oil and gas into Turkey, had done a deal with the opposition.

America's serious interest in oil-rich Central Asian dictatorships has resulted in various surprising, opportunistic, alliances.

Conclusion

In Marx and Engels' COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, we find this argument:

Political power, properly so-called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during the contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled by the force of circumstances to organise itself as a class, if by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class and, as such, sweeps away by force the old

conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally. It will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Any sensible reading of this passage must bring the realisation that class struggle over the ownership of the means of production is the driving force for change in history; that political power and control of the State is the key to one class dominating another; and that this class domination and oppression can finally be ended only by the working class gaining political power to end power and classes altogether.

All direct action arguments rely on the absurd notion that the working class can somehow outgun the capitalist class's armed forces. The SPGB has always argued that direct action, confronting the coercive power of the state, would be a suicidal strategy. The capitalist class has invariably resorted to state force against workers, even against those with very limited industrial aims: for instance, the Fire Brigades Union, the 1984 NUM strike, the dock strike in the late 1940's; the General Strike in 1926, etc. Even more so when they feel their class position is threatened, e.g. the Paris Commune.

Class ownership of the means of production and the capitalists' consequent ability to exploit the working class - *"those who produce but do not possess"* - is sustained and protected by the coercive apparatus of the state. That means that, if we are to end this state of affairs, it is essential to defeat them on the field of political struggle.

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Replies To Correspondents

Like most writers and editors, we try to ensure that what we publish is reliable, at least regarding factual accuracy. However, two subscribers have written to us in protest, making very different points, and both questioning this passage about The SPGB's formation in 1904:

At the time, this party was unique: there had never been one like it before. Unlike all the other working class parties of the time, this was to be a Party with only one objective: working for Socialism and only for Socialism. The German Social Democrat Party, the French Parti Ouvrier, the SDF, the ILP, the Labour Representation Committee (later the Labour Party), the Socialist Labour Party (in Scotland and the USA) - all of these relied on a raft of reformist "immediate demands", a shopping list of 'palliatives', to attract mass support. Such parties still do. The SPGB, No.50, p2

J Plant wrote, with a touch of sarcasm, challenging us to produce:

...the "raft" of "immediate demands", together with the "shopping list" of "palliatives" of the current Socialist Labor Party of America. A "raft" and "shopping list" must, by definition, together comprise a considerable number of items, but perhaps you could prune the list somewhat to only the principal ones, which may enable you to just squeeze them onto one sheet of A4 paper? I am sure that you have plenty to do, but if you find the time, and if your budget would permit the use of an extra sheet or two of A4 paper, maybe you could, apart from the current list of immediate demands and palliatives, also list a few others of the Socialist Labor Party of America over the period, say, of the last 100 years?

It will not surprise him that we decline to waste space listing the particular palliatives advocated by the Socialist Labour Party in Britain or the American SLP. The passage quoted above was dealing with the *historical* circumstances in which The SPGB was formed, and the existence then of reformist political organisations which claimed to be Socialist whilst advocating reforms of capitalism. It is undeniable that such parties still do put forward lists of *"immediate demands"*, reforms offered to make life under capitalism a bit less intolerable, and to attract support.

Was it true for us to state that in 1904 the Socialist Labour Party had a programme of *"immediate demands"* or

"palliatives"?

That party's programme was well-known to the founder-members of The SPGB. Later, under De Leon's guidance, the SLP adopted industrial unionism as the central plank of its platform but initially it had a different programme. In the 1911 preface to our 1905 MANIFESTO, The SPGB asserted:

The Socialist Labour Party was formed in Scotland by seceding members of the SDF (now SDP). Its founders did not comprehend the real significance of the revolutionary struggle, for they adopted a list of "immediate demands" (THE SOCIALIST, July 1903), for palliating the evils of capitalism, thus leading the workers to believe that their interests could be served by patching up the present system instead of devoting their energies to its overthrow. The formation of a real Socialist Party (The SPGB) and the publication of its official organ, the SOCIALIST STANDARD, eventually convinced them of the unsoundness of their position in this respect, and their "immediate demands" were abandoned (THE SOCIALIST, June and November 1905).

If there were no 1903 programme of "immediate demands", how come these were later, in 1905, "abandoned"? That preface appeared in several editions of the MANIFESTO of The SPGB, including the 6th edition (1920). Mr Plant should note these points from the 1920 preface:

The Socialist Labour Party also found themselves carried away by the flood of confusion [i.e. re the war]. One of the contributors to their party organ, THE SOCIALIST, wrote (December 1914):-

The SLP - let us admit it freely - has been taken by storm, though not so disastrously as other parties. What policy does the SLP follow with respect to this war? We don't know. We are disunited. We are groping for a lead at the present time.

The Editor of the same journal wrote in the issue of November 1914, three months after the war broke out:-I cannot say what the official attitude of the Party is.

Probably the fact that they could not decide their attitude accounts for their action in 1918 when the Executive Committees of the Socialist Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party, and the British Socialist Party [i.e. the former SDF/SDP] jointly issued a manifesto on the eve of the General Election.

Perhaps this sort of contemporary evidence is not enough for Mr Plant, who is clearly sceptical about our honesty. But there is another sort of evidence, of "the dog that didn't bark" variety. When a statement is made which is untrue, an organisation's spokesmen and members should try to correct it. If such a statement is not challenged, it is not unreasonable for us to conclude that the statement in question was in fact true and undeniable.

In a formal debate against the SLP, The SPGB spokesman, in his opening speech, stated that the SLP had a programme of "immediate demands" or "palliatives". If that was untrue, you would expect the SLP speaker in his reply to say so. But, in that debate between The SPGB and the SLP, when this statement was made by The SPGB spokesman, it was not disputed by the SLP speaker (see SOCIALIST STANDARD, April 1907).

The SPGB's statement about the SLP, subtitled *A Statement of Differences* (SOCIALIST STANDARD, August 1906), asserted that:

The constitution of the SLP, then, and for some time after, had a 'palliative' or 'reform' programme as part, while The Socialist Party's constitution ignored such confusionist items.

An SLP member's letter of protest was published (October 1906). But his protest said nothing about that particular charge being inaccurate. It seems that all concerned accepted the undeniable truth of The SPGB's assertions that the SLP, prior to adopting industrial unionism, had indeed a programme of "immediate demands".

As for the American Socialist Labor Party, led in its glory days by Daniel De Leon, it is a fact that their continued attendance at the Congresses of the International were subject to conditions which meant that they had to sit as part of the American delegation dominated by the, thoroughly reformist, Socialist Party of America.

Faced with a similar situation, The SPGB tried to get the International Socialist Bureau, of which Daniel De Leon was a member, to admit only genuinely Socialist parties as members of the International. Failing to achieve this, The SPGB decided to withdraw from this organisation, dominated as it was by reformist and non-Socialist parties.

De Leon however continued to attend its Congresses, even though required to sit alongside delegates from the - reformist - Socialist Party of America. An early 'Unity' conference was held, initiated by the SPA (Dec.1905-March 1906). Another 'Unity' conference was proposed by the SLP (NEC Resolution, Jan. 1908) but rejected by the SPA. Yet another 'Unity' conference (New York, Jan 6-7, 1917) failed only due to the SLP's insistence on industrial unionism: significantly the two parties had no trouble reaching agreement on their "*aim and reform policies*" (SOCIALIST STANDARD, March 1917).

The SLP had long since signalled its willingness to relegate Socialism to a secondary status as merely their "*ultimate goal*". Their *Address* to the European movement argued that the parties of the Second International "*its brother-parties of the various countries ... the European comrades ... have become so enmeshed in bourgeois politics that they have apparently lost sight of .. the ultimate goal of the Socialist movement*" (quoted in the SOCIALIST STANDARD, September 1915). The phrase "*ultimate goal*" clearly implies that there were also "*immediate demands*".

Later, the SLP succumbed to utter confusion in its assessment of the Soviet Union ("*where capitalism has been done away with*"), and the belief that Socialism - a "*Socialist Republic*" - could take place in just one country:

"Can the other nations be expected to agree to fraternal and cooperative relations (in the event of A Socialist America)?" . Eventually, yes! ... What if they don't? Would this country stand exposed to aggression? Not in the least. A Socialist America could, if it had to, defend itself with unmatched material strength and moral unity. SLP election leaflet, 1969, quoted in THE WESTERN SOCIALIST, 1969 no. 6.

As for the positions of latter-day American industrial unionists and a variety of De Leonist splinter-groups, it is clear that for some, as that 1969 article showed, lists of social reforms were not at all ruled out. In short, on either side of the Atlantic, the SLP was hopelessly compromised with reformism. Like the other parties of the Second International, the SLP shilly-shallied about the 1914-19 war; and like almost all 'Socialist' parties with this background became confused about the Soviet Union. Such parties did a lot to hold back the movement for Socialism.

Another correspondent, Peter E Newell, wrote to us:

Whilst it is true, and to its credit, that The SPGB was formed with the sole object of socialism, and that it consistently opposed the First World War, it was not unique in 1904, nor was it the only political party in the world to consistently stand against that war.

Early in 1902 (it may have been late in 1901) a party was formed in British Columbia named the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Canada. In December 1902, it contested a by-election in North Nanaimo, Vancouver Island ... Its sole 'platform' was the abolition of capitalism and the wages system - and no immediate demands, reforms or palliatives... Its foundation members included James Pritchard, who before emigrating to Canada had worked in the Ermen and Engels Textile Mill, and had been a member of the Social Democratic Federation in Salford. It is generally accepted in Canada that the Revolutionary Socialist Party was the world's first anti-reformist, 'impossibilist' party. In September 1903, the Socialist Party of British Columbia, founded in 1901, adopted the RSPC's revolutionary Platform, as did the Socialist Party of Canada, founded at the beginning of 1905.

On the day that the First World War began, August 6 1914, the Dominion Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Canada issued its Manifesto to the Workers of Canada, in which it stated its opposition to capitalism and the war, and called on the workers of the world to unite as they have nothing to lose but their chains - but a world to win. Two weeks later, The SPGB issued a similar statement. Both parties consistently opposed the war from beginning to end .. These are the facts

The SPC's PLATFORM, published in its journal, THE WESTERN CLARION, until the SPC's collapse (1925), like The SPGB's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, emphasised the class struggle:

the irrepressible conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker necessarily expresses itself as a struggle for

political supremacy.

The SPC's aim was:-

1. The transformation, as rapidly as possible, of capitalist property in the means of wealth production (natural resources, factories, mills, railroads, etc.) into collective means of production.
2. The organisation and management of industry by the working class.
3. The establishment, as speedily as possible, of production for use instead of production for profit.

The PLATFORM of the SPC stated that:

The present economic system is based upon capitalist ownership of the means of production, consequently, all the products of labor belong to the capitalist class. The capitalist is therefore master; the worker a slave ... The interest of the working class lies in setting itself free from capitalist exploitation by the abolition of the wage system, under which this exploitation, at the point of production, is cloaked. To accomplish this necessitates the transformation of capitalist property in the means of wealth production into socially controlled economic forces.

The SPC argued for political action with a clear statement of the role of the state:

So long as the capitalist class remains in possession of the reins of government all the powers of the State will be used to protect and defend its property rights in the means of wealth production and its control of the product of labor.

At its 1903 convention, an uncompromising resolution was carried unanimously:

Resolved that this convention places itself on record as absolutely opposed to the introduction of palliatives or immediate demands in propaganda work, as being liable to retard the achievement of our final aims, and that the Socialist Party of British Columbia henceforth stands firmly upon the one issue of the abolition of the present system of wage slavery as the basis for all political organisation (WESTERN CLARION, 11 Sept. 1903).

When 23 candidates stood (1903), their Election Platform was short and to the point: THE ABOLITION OF THE WAGES SYSTEM AND OPPOSITION TO ALL PALLIATIVES. By 1911, the Vancouver Local had over 100 members and held weekly classes, on economics, history and philosophy, also a Speaker's Class (letter from Bill Pritchard who joined the SPC in 1911, WESTERN SOCIALIST, December 1968).

When the First World War broke out, the SPC's Dominion Executive Committee met (August 6th 1914) and agreed on this MANIFESTO TO THE WORKERS OF CANADA:

In view of the European situation, and the efforts of the capitalist press and politicians to stir up a war fever in Canada, to the end that Canadian working men will be induced to take up arms in defence of the interests of their masters, the Socialist Party of Canada, instead of passing futile resolutions of protest, would call your attention to the following facts:

1. Inasmuch as all modern wars have their origin in the disputes of the international capitalist class for markets in which to dispose of the stolen products of labor, or to protect themselves in the possession of markets they already have, the motive of the anticipated struggle in Europe is of no real interest to the international working class.
2. Further, as the struggle, if materialized, will claim as its victims countless thousands of the members of our class in a quarrel that is not theirs, it behoves the workers not to be carried away by the frenzied clamorings of the blare of martial music. In no conceivable manner, shape or form could the interests of the workers of any of the nationalities involved be furthered or protected by their participation in the conflict.
3. Since the international working class produces all the wealth of the world, and still possesses nothing, receiving in the shape of wages but sufficient to maintain a slavish existence, and since the international capitalist class occupies the position of a social parasite, producing nothing and possessing everything, which position it is able to maintain by virtue of its control of the powers of State - the only struggle that can be of vital interest to the working class of all nations, is that which has for its object the wresting of this power from the hands of the master class, and using it to

remove all forms of exploitation and servitude.

To this struggle the Socialist Party of Canada calls you. The only barrier standing in our way is ignorance in the ranks of our own class. As an International Working class we have but one enemy - the International Capitalist Class.
WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS!
[Source: Jim Milne's HISTORY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA]

That workers the other side of the world experiencing the same exploitation should arrive at similar conclusions is an impressive vindication of Marxism. We are happy to put the record straight.

War and the Workers

What the workers suffer from everywhere is capitalism. Their interest requires that they should concentrate on achieving Socialism. War is not a means to that end. It solves no problem of the working class ... They have no concern with capitalist trade and foreign investment. They have no interest at stake which justifies giving support to war.

The SPGB, WAR AND THE WORKING CLASS (1936),p16-17

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Workers For Sale

Children are taught about slavery at school. They are told about how the Romans had slaves and how, centuries ago, African slaves were bought from Arab slave-traders and African kings. Children are told how men and women were transported across the Atlantic as slaves for the sugar and cotton plantations.

Many people believe slavery ended in Britain in 1807. In fact a peculiar kind of slavery was already in a process of becoming universal: wage slavery. The historical context which led to wage slavery is not taught in schools. A teacher who told the truth to schoolchildren about the genesis of capitalism would be hounded out as a "*subversive*" or "*Marxist revolutionary*". In universities economics lecturers go out of their way to deny the existence of wage slavery and class exploitation. Politicians spread the lie that the capitalist class, not the working class, are the "*wealth creators*".

You will not see wage slavery referred to in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The authors of this document saw no problem with the buying and selling of labour power. They thought it quite natural that workers sold their mental and physical ability to work for a wage and a salary. They did not think the labour market was a site of class power and coercion. Which it is. Workers are forced into the labour market. They are coerced into the wages system. And in the wages system they are systematically exploited as a class no matter what job they do.

In the early 1800's men and women were being driven off the land, very much as they are today in developing capitalist countries. Between 1795 and 1812 British governments passed more than 1500 Enclosure Acts in favour of the landowners. The peasants were made propertyless. They were forced onto the labour market as wage labour or face starvation. Women and children of the working class were broken in the mills and mines of what is called the Industrial Revolution. Wage slavery is a form of class exploitation, just as are serfdom, chattel slavery and debt bondage.

Marx wrote about the birth of capitalism, and told the truth. Of the genesis of capitalism, he wrote in CAPITAL (Vol. 1, Ch XXXII):

"To establish the "eternal laws of Nature" of the capitalist mode of production {meant} to transform, at one pole, the social means of production and subsistence into capital, and at the opposite pole, the mass of the population into wage-labourers, into "free labouring poor" ...If money, according to Augier, "comes into the world with congenital blood-stain on one cheek", capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt".

The UN Charter said that no one should be a slave. But today billions of workers are wage slaves. The working class, no matter whether their wages are high or low, their working conditions good or bad, whether they are in trade unions or not, are an exploited class producing more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. The capitalist class do not produce any social wealth. Social wealth is produced by the working class. Under capitalism, the workers only receive back a fraction of what they produce. The capitalist class live off the exploitation of wage slavery through the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

Of course slavery, in the sense of receiving no wage or salary for work, did not die out. Slavery existed and still exists throughout the world, for instance as '*debt-bondage*'. For instance, with the increasing movement of capital and labour throughout the world, men, women and children have ended up as chattel slaves within Britain with children being sent to '*relatives*', and through illegal immigration. Yet compared to wage slavery this is marginal. Wage slavery is the dominant form of exploitation throughout the world. Yet you do not read of wage slavery in the index of economic text books.

According to Anti-Slavery International, "*hundreds of women and children are trafficked into Britain a year - a conservative estimate based on reported cases*" (U MAGAZINE, 2004, p17). However millions of workers exist in wage slavery. Yet Anti-Slavery International denies that the wages system is wage slavery. They are only interested in low wages and poor working conditions, not the existence of the wages system and the labour market. Like all reform groups they do not want to challenge capitalism. They do not want to criticise class power and class exploitation. They are relaxed about the means of production being owned and controlled by a small parasitic minority.

Yes, some capitalists in Britain have domestic slaves. Some people have to work in "*debt bondage*", but the issue for the working class remains capitalism, not the effects of capitalism. Anti-Slavery International would be quite happy to see all workers in waged employment as long as it was "*fair*". As social reformers they have no time for Socialism. They campaign for legislation and changes in policy in the absurd belief that the state is neutral. But the state is not neutral - it is a coercive power. Socialists want to get rid of the wages system and find reform organisations like the ASI are simply barriers to understanding capitalism and organising politically for its abolition.

As for the trade unions: they too accept the wages system. They do not challenge the existence of labour markets, the buying and selling of labour power, and the class ownership of the means of production. For all their huffing and puffing the trade unions are satisfied with the conservative motto of "*a fair day's work for a fair day's pay*" for their members. They do not accept that their own members exist in a state of wage slavery. They have absorbed the vulgar and apologetic economics which Marx showed did little more than shore up the interests of the capitalist class.

So it comes as no surprise to see that unions like UNISON have jumped up on the anti-slavery bandwagon. UNISON is affiliated to Anti-Slavery International, and encourages its members to support social reformers such as the Stop Human Traffic campaign. What it does not do is urge its membership to read Marx and understand class exploitation. It does not ask workers to see beyond the pay packet. Yet it follows every trendy reform. It uses its 'political fund' for supporting reforms. The one thing it keeps absolutely silent about is wage slavery.

Marx urged workers to forget about wanting capitalism to be fair. Capitalism can only ever exploit. It can only ever be ugly, nasty and unpleasant. Instead of wasting time, campaigning against every conceivable problem thrown up by capitalism, the working class should take conscious and political action to abolish capitalism itself. That is where their collective political strength lies. As Socialists. And this means abolishing wage slavery the world over. It means abolishing the wages system. It means abolishing capitalism. As Clause 4 of The SPGB's DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES states: "*That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex*".

Wage Slavery

I would banish the word wages from the language, and consign it, with the word slavery, to histories and dictionaries. Wages is a term of purchase; it means the piecemeal purchase of your blood, and bones, and brains, at weekly payments; it is the present name for the Saturday's market price of man, woman and child!

Wages by "Senex", from THE PIONEER, 14 June 1834, quoted in

A RADICAL READER: THE STRUGGLE FOR CHANGE IN ENGLAND, 1381-1914, ed. C. Hampton, p 460

A Letter From China

Hi

In China, this year it is the year of Monkey. The year I was born was the year of Monkey, too. I hope you have a good year and happy the Spring Festival! First, I am sorry. In fact, I want to say Socialism can not be achieved in one country, however big and however advanced. It is my clerical mistake. Sorry! I believe man is not born selfish, at first. But, sometimes, the man that born in a kind-hearted family may become a criminal. How to explain that? As for the reform of China, do not you think that Chinese government is using Marxism according to the actual conditions? China has many reality difficulties. The capitalism prevails in the world, now. Do you think China will be a socialist country, if China implements the multi-party system? Of course, communism society is still my ideal. We all do my best for it, now. Well, do you support for implementing socialism regime by violent revolution?

Yours, YP

Dear YP

Thank you for e-mailing us, we return your greeting and hope the year of the Monkey is a happy year for you.

We confirm your point that Socialism cannot be achieved in only one country. Capitalism is worldwide and the social problems it generates - poverty, militarism, unemployment, national rivalries and wars - clearly do not lend themselves to being removed from one area to the exclusion of the rest. As the working class comes to understand the need for Socialism, they will co-operate on a world scale. National states and frontiers will be obsolete with the establishment of Socialism. When Socialism is established the concept of '*countries*' will disappear.

Your second point about a man not being born selfish, but becoming a criminal later, contains the seeds of its own answer. The process of social conditioning plays the major part in what we may become. Kind-heartedness does not always flourish in a world of competition and private-property relationships. Most crimes are in those categories concerned with '*illegally*' taking property of one kind or another that belongs to someone else. Social behaviour reflects the society in which we live with its haves and have-nots, rich and poor, employers and employees. In a world where

money and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a minority class, the wealth producers are surrounded by expensive things that they and their class produce but cannot afford.

It would be useful here to define some of the terms you use in order to see more clearly the conditions you are aware of, both in China and elsewhere.

Marxism analyses capitalism - the system of commodity production where the means of production (factories, land, railways etc) are owned by one class to the exclusion of the majority who as *employees* depend upon *wages* in order to live.

Marxism seeks to end this system through a majority class-consciousness revolution and to establish Socialism/Communism.

Socialism and *Communism* mean the same. Marx and Engels used the terms interchangeably. Engels explained, in the 1888 Preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, that they had used the name Communist, because Socialism had been misrepresented in popular use in the Europe and England of 1847. Not too unlike today!

Both terms mean the worldwide common ownership of the industrial and material resources of the earth. A classless society with no money, markets or wages-system where the requirements for a full and happy life will be abundantly produced and freely available according to need.

As to conditions in China it will be seen from the above that the Chinese ruling clique are not using Marxism at all, except as a distorted propaganda ploy to distract attention away from the capitalist system they are operating. This, the Soviet Bolsheviks did before them. Multi-party systems exist throughout most of the capitalist world. In one-party

systems like that of China, dissenting voices and rival capitalist interests operate and find expression inside the one legal party.

It is *Socialist understanding* that will determine the decisive movement for Socialism. Multi-party capitalism solves no working class problems. Only one genuine Socialist party is needed in any political area or country. China will become a Socialist society only when, in common with fellow workers worldwide, the great majority of Chinese workers understand, want and organise for this

It will be achieved by the working class themselves. It will not be handed down to them by vanguardist leaders.

Finally, the question of violent revolution

Because there can be no Socialism unless the vast majority want it, Socialism will be brought about by the self-emancipation of the working class. It can only be democratic, because a society of socially equal men and women could function in no other way. Any violence therefore would be incidental and not initiated by Socialists. As class struggles are always necessarily political, gaining control of the State apparatus by the vote is the necessary precondition to stripping the capitalist class of their ownership of society's means of living. With political power in the hands of workers, the capitalists will have no coercive force and would lose any violent challenge against the democratic majority.

It must be firmly borne in mind that the object of workers (through their own Socialist Party) gaining political power is to make the means of production communal and to end thereby the existence of all classes, including the working class, and once and for all to end the power of one class over another.

Lights Go Out In The Ukraine

Socialist Enlightenment from the Ukraine contacted our Party through the web, claiming to have broken away from an organisation linked to the so-called World Socialist Movement, principally made up of members of the Clapham-based Socialist Party.

After several e-mails and letters to Socialist Enlightenment we have received no reply to our questions over the legitimacy of their organisation, their acceptance of the Object and Declaration of Principles of The SPGB, and the 'scam' which has been uncovered in Kiev whereby numerous political organisations were hoodwinked into believing that they had found like-minded supporters in the Ukraine.

The continued silence from Socialist Enlightenment leads us to conclude that they, too, were part of this deception, either engaged in for political or financial reasons. This is obviously a disappointment but it was not the first time and nor will it be the last that anti-Socialists have tried to infiltrate the party.

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The Iraq War - From Bad To Worse

The occupation of Iraq has brought the predictable opposition of the unfortunate people of that country, and the brutal, systematic torture, sexual abuse, and humiliation of captives by the occupying forces. This, while the US and British politicians boast of the heroics of these fine, brave boys (and girls), and declare that they are sure that all is being done in compliance with international laws such as the Geneva Convention. Just as it was at Guantanamo Bay, and at Baghram air-base in Afghanistan. Even with photographs which, to at least one shocked American Senator, suggested images likely to appear on a pornographic S and M website (how would he know?), the great and the good mostly declare this was, and is, a '*just war*'.

In 1997, the year Blair's New Labour government took the place of the Tories in running British capitalism, the latest edition of THE STATE OF WAR AND PEACE ATLAS was published. In just five years, from 1990 to 1995, there were worldwide about 5.5 million war deaths of whom three quarters were civilians, including approximately a million children. The number of refugees doubled from 1980 to 1995, from 22m in 1980 to about 40m (1990-95). Some regions and countries have experienced wars more than others: e.g. Yugoslavia's so-called 'ethnic cleansing', Chechnya, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine and endless horrendous wars/ civil wars in most of Africa, to name but a few

of the main arenas. The latest phase of war mongering in South East Asia at that time was over control of natural resources:

Parties divide on ethnic or religious lines and fight for forests, gold and copper ... Beneath the sea lie untapped oil reserves. Oil persuades the Australian government to turn a blind eye to Indonesia's otherwise widely condemned occupation of East Timor. Oil lends a modern urgency to China's claim that the whole of the South China Sea is part of its 'Sacred Territory'. And oil helps to explain why every other state in the region contests the Chinese claim. THE STATE OF WAR AND PEACE ATLAS, 1997, p61

For the record here are some extracts from one of our pamphlets, showing something of what Socialists have said in the past concerning the Labour Party and wars:

The Labour Party supported the first and second world wars, on both occasions entering war-time coalition governments and supporting conscription. Between the wars the Labour party, playing on the war-weariness of the working class, was able to build up for itself the reputation of being the party of peace and disarmament, as against the 'war-mongering' Tories ...

This myth of the Labour party as the party of peace still survives to a certain extent and attracts pacifists and nuclear disarmers. Today, however, the Labour party is as patriotic and militaristic as the Conservative party. When in office after the war it continued war-time conscription, began the manufacture of British atomic weapons, joined NATO and started a costly rearmament programme. It sent troops to fight in Malaya and Korea, and the Wilson government 1964-70 gave general support to America in the Vietnam War. The SPGB pamphlet, THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, 1970, p64

Another passage seems particularly relevant now with reports and photos of nauseating and systematic abuse - or was it torture? - of Iraqi 'detainees' at the hands of the Western military and intelligence people:

War cannot solve working class problems. It cuts across the basic identity of interest of the workers of the world, setting sections of them at enmity with each other in the interests of the capitalist class. It elevates violence into the position of arbiter in place of the common desire for mutual peace and happiness. Its effect is wholly evil. It depraves all the participants by forcing them to concentrate on the best methods of producing misery and of killing each other. It elevates, lying, cheating, disabling and murdering opponents into virtues, confers honours on those who practise these means most successfully. Young men and women in their most impressionable years have the vile methods of warfare imposed on them and are filled with the idea that violence and not understanding is the final solution in all problems.

Socialism is completely opposed to war and what it represents. The Socialist Party ...is opposed to war not on some abstract religious or moral grounds but because it conflicts with the interests of the working class. Wars are fought to protect and further the interests of rival capitalist groups. In these orgies of death and destruction which capitalism periodically and inevitably produces, workers suffer and die not for their own interests but for those of their masters. (Ibid. p70-71).

As we pointed out in our pamphlet WAR AND CAPITALISM, the reasons governments give for going to war bear little resemblance to the real reasons. Whatever the reasons for wars, these have nothing to do with the interests of the working class.

Whose oil wells? Whose profits? Not ours!

The turf wars of the capitalist class are not our concern, any more than it matters to us which of the top supermarket chains ends up with the lion's share of the market. The capitalist system is based on competition, which from time to time is taken to extremes, becoming violent. But capitalism's wars are never fought in the interests of the working class. Fact.

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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